

***Saxifraga rivularis* (L.)**
pygmy saxifrage
Saxifragaceae (Saxifrage Family)

Status: State Sensitive

Rank: G5?S3

General Description: A tufted perennial that forms patches 1 to 3 in. (3 to 8 cm) broad with several leafy flower stalks $\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 in. (1 to 10 cm) tall. The stems and leaves are glabrous to glandular-hairy. The flowering stems are several and mostly less than 4 in. (10 cm) tall. The basal leaves are kidney shaped with shallow lobes and have bulblets in the leaf axils. The stem leaves are reduced and generally without bulblets. The flowers usually number 1 or 2 per stem. The calyx is purple-tinged with deciduous white petals bearing pink veins. The seed capsules are $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (4 to 6 mm) long with brown, wrinkled, elliptic seeds $\frac{1}{32}$ in. ($\frac{1}{2}$ mm) long.

Identification Tips: *Saxifraga rivularis* is most closely related to *S. cernua*. These species can be distinguished by the nature of their bulblets, flowering stems, and ovaries. *S. rivularis* has bulblets in only the axils of the basal leaves, its flowering stems are mostly less than 4 in. (10 cm) tall, and its ovary at anthesis is about $\frac{1}{2}$ inferior. The bulblets of *S. cernua* are borne in the axils of the upper cauline leaves and in place of at least the lower flowers, its flowering stems are commonly at least 4 in. (10 cm) tall, and its ovary at anthesis is scarcely $\frac{1}{4}$ inferior.

Phenology: *Saxifraga rivularis* flowers in July and August.

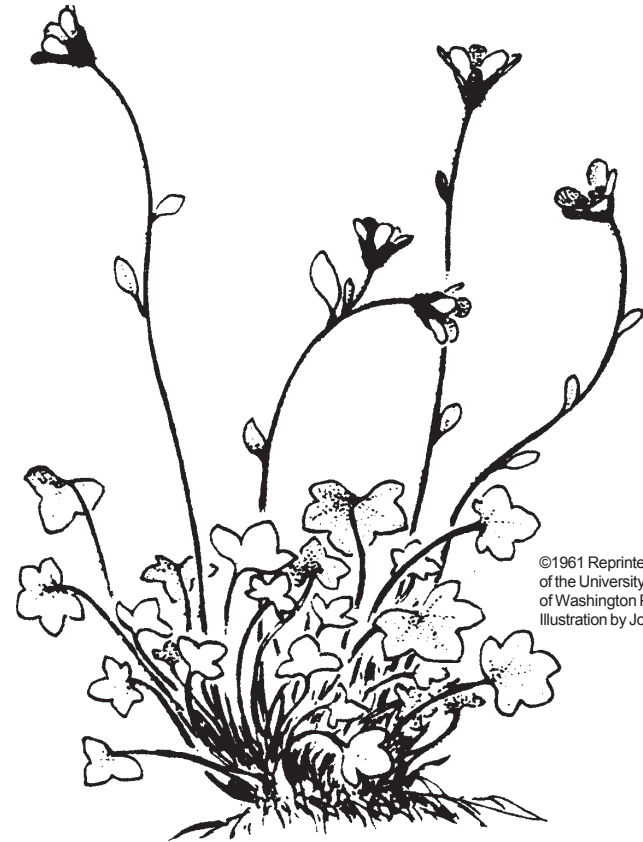
Range: The species occurs in British Columbia south to the Cascades and Olympics of Washington, the Blue and Wallowa Mountains of Oregon, and the Sierra Nevada and Rockies to Utah and Colorado.

Habitat: *The species can be found on damp cliffs, rock crevices, and talus near snowbanks, as well as alpine slopes, cracks, and shaded cliffs.*

Ecology: *It is noted that the species is commonly found occurring as single plants rather than in clusters or populations. Saxifraga rivularis occurs around basaltic crevices, granitic cliffs, and moss-covered detritus, and can also grow on vertical rock faces.*

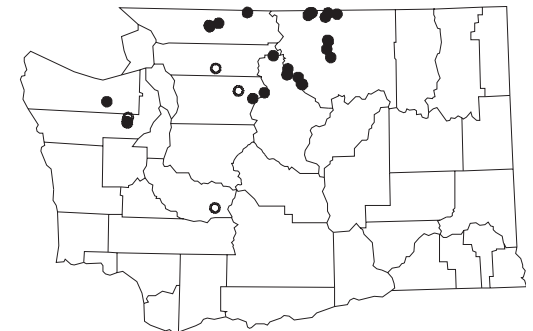
Elevation ranges from 6000-7000 ft (2000-2300 m).

Saxifraga rivularis
pygmy saxifrage



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Known distribution
of *Saxifraga rivularis*
in Washington



● Current (1980+)
○ Historic (older than 1980)

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Photo by Bob Kovalchik



Photo by Bob Kovalchik



Photo by Dean W. Taylor

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State Status Comments: There are 13 recent sightings and six historical sightings for the species. It is currently found in Okanogan, Whatcom, Snohomish, Jefferson, Clallam, and Chelan counties.

Inventory Needs: Additional inventory is needed.

Threats and Management Concerns: Mining is the greatest threat to *S. rivularis*. Grazing also poses a threat; however, its rocky habitat makes accessibility by grazing animals somewhat limited.

Comments: *S. rivularis* is synonymous with *S. debilis*. According to Hitchcock (1961), our *Saxifraga rivularis* may be regarded as a variety of the arctic species, with the main difference being the smaller flowers, numerous teeth on the leaves, and the development of basal bulblets.

References:

Hitchcock, C.L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey and J.W. Thompson. 1961. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest, Part 3: Saxifragaceae to Ericaceae*. University of Washington Press, Seattle. 614 pp.

Washington Natural Heritage Program. 1981. *An Illustrated Guide to the Endangered, Threatened and Sensitive Vascular Plants of Washington*. Washington State Department of Natural Resources. 328 pp.